3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

244 17½ lb. During the lamentably short season of about three weeks in August–September a Beshak of this size costs 3*d.* in the bazaar. Melons like a slightly salt soil, but must have a great deal of water; when we were making an orchard out of the lower garden, which had been under useless and insect-harbouring Babylonian willow, we first sowed melons in order to take the salt out of the soil, and the crop we obtained was a magnificent one. The Beshak Shirin of Kashgar is of the same kind, and probably just as good, as the famous melons of Hami in the extreme east of the province. The latter used 431 to be sent as presents to the Emperor in classical times, as any educated Chinamen will tell you. As the distance is 2,000 miles by road, and as the Beshak is a delicate melon and quickly goes bad, I often wondered how they did it; and I once questioned a Chinese official who had been posted at [251] Hami on the subject. He told me that the reason why Hami melons are so much prized is because they retain their flavour even when dried. There is, or was, a regular trade in dried melons between Hami and China Proper. Presents of fresh melons were, however, sent to the Emperors of the late Ching Dynasty every year by special camel caravan across the Mongolian Desert. Ten times as many as the number intended for presentation used to be sent, each packed in a box separately with cotton wool, as only about ten per cent. of those sent used to be fit for the Emperor's table when they arrived.

244 We grew all our own vegetables in the garden, of which D. was in charge, except potatoes, which were good and cheap in the bazaar and took up too much room in the garden. Beginning with spinach in March we were well supplied throughout the season with asparagus, green peas, cabbages, red tomatoes, French beans, cauliflowers and Brussels sprouts. D. also introduced broad beans, yellow "Golden Queen" tomatoes and *brinjal* or egg-plant (the French *aubergine*) from India; all did very well and were greatly appreciated by our Chinese guests.

251 As we had no greenhouses, owing to the prohibitive cost of glass, it was necessary to store vegetables throughout the winter by burying them in deep pits. Owing to the intense dryness it was possible to do this without first drying the vegetables, and we thus got cabbages, cauliflowers and Brussels sprouts fresh daily right through till March, when the spinach (sown the previous autumn) was ready. The mouths of the

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

pits were filled up with a layer three feet thick of branches, matting, straw and leaves, a small hole closed with straw only being left for the gardener to get in and out by.

With regard to fruit, nearly everything that is found in a south of England garden grew well in our garden; most of the fruit indeed ripened too quickly so that there was a good deal of waste. We used to get two crops of green figs, but the trees had to be well covered up in winter to protect them from the frost. Grapes also grew wonderfully, the base of the vine-stem being similarly covered up in winter. Strawberries (known locally as "Russian mulberries") grew in profusion, but never became very sweet or large because they ripened too quickly. Apples and pears were poor, for lack of good European varieties, but peaches, nectarines, black mulberries, greengages and damsons were all as good as could be; the greengages, indeed, were almost too sweet. And yet our orchard was not a good one, compared for instance with those of the chief Andijani merchants. Besides all the above, they grew magnificent cherries, quinces and pomegranates, none of which were good in our garden. Among flowers, most annuals did very well, and roses too if the bushes were carefully buried in winter. D. started a most successful rose-garden with several varieties imported from India.

I have already mentioned the frequency with which we were entertained by the hospitable Chinese officials. This was particularly the case when Chu Tao Tai, as he was generally called, was Taoyin or Prefect of Kashgaria. From the social point of view, apart from everything else, it was a great blow to us when after a long term of office at Kashgar this universally-respected official was transferred to Yarkand in the autumn of 1922. Beaming all over with humour and good-will, he was one of the best hosts I have ever seen, and we always looked forward to his parties. He got over the language difficulty at the more polyglot meals by the simple method of seating all the guests of one nationality together, so that there was always a subdued hum of conversation, if no more; besides which he himself was always an interesting and interested talker and kept the available interpreters fully occupied. What appealed to us most, however, was his consideration for his foreign guests' likes and dislikes. He had evidently made a special study of European tastes and manners, and as far as possible he tempered the wind of Chinese hospitality to the shorn Western lamb.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

The Kirghiz of the Kaying valley cultivate only a few acres of barley and eat little bread. Their staple food is milk and its products, *katak* or sour cream and *qurut*, a kind of cheese. In most tents you will also find a cauldron of *mach* brewing, the soup containing flour and milk already mentioned. *Qurut* is made by drying sour cream in goat-skins; the method is to hang the goat-skins full of cream about eight feet from the ground under a piece of cord netting stretched across the top of four posts. The netting keeps off eagles and hawks, while the height from the ground defeats dogs and other animals. When a Kirghiz is to be away from his home for a day or more, he takes with him for food a few balls of *qurut*, and supplements them with wild rhubarb and celery which he knows where to find on the mountain-side. Bread is made in solid lumps, the only leaven used being sour milk; the poorer families can seldom afford it, fortunately for their digestions. Meat is even more of a luxury; a sheep is only killed on great occasions, when the meat is boiled in large cauldrons, not roasted. Sometimes one of the *mergens* or hunters of the community succeeds in slaying an ibex hind with his ancient matchlock, and then there is great feasting.

A valley like Kaying is almost but not quite self-supporting. Boots, Kashgar cotton cloth, muslin and coloured handkerchiefs for the ladies, knives, etc., are bought by the men on their rare expeditions to Yangi Hissar, or from the itinerant traders from the plains who visit the valley two or three times during the season. The money for these purchases is found by the sale of such surplus local products as remain after the revenue and other demands of the Beg have been satisfied. These products include live stock, raw wool, rope and matting made of camel's or yak's hair, cheese, red fox pelts and ibex

Chimghan, with Tersöze and other side-valleys, 60 households.
Khanterek, i.e. the main valley and its branches below the great gorge, including Kaying, Chopkana, Yapchan, etc., 30 households.
Terek Kichik (among the mountains on the east side of the Qaratash), 100 households.

The assessment of a typical division, the Chimghan, is as follows:

4 *saghins* of cheese, i.e. the output of 4 yaks in a year.
40 camel-hair ropes.
100 *charaks* of barley flour (1 *charak* 20 lbs.).
10 yaks or ponies to be lent for transport purposes whenever required.

Besides the above, the Beg exacts one sheep per household for himself; he receives no pay from the Chinese authorities.

C. The Kirghiz

563 1. The people

Taking Tien-shan as a whole, the Kirghiz form the leading [771] element of the population. They are Mohammedans of the Suni order, but they are not strict followers of their religion. Their [642] system of government is patriarchal, control of the different [622] sections being vested in tribal elders who enjoy almost unlimited authority. The elders (Manap) are chosen by the people, and regarded with honor and respect.

[233] The people are nomads whose main occupation is cattle rais- [241] ing. Only a small proportion of the population engages in farming.

563 2. Patterns of living

342 a. Dwelling

The Kirghiz do not live in houses. The poor live in shelters [184] made of branches under trees or against overhanging rocks. The rich live in tents, smaller and less ornate than the Mongolian yurt but more solid with thick layers of felt. A light tent is called an aq-ai. It stands a gale very well, as the shape is such that a high wind presses the structure even more firmly to the ground. To make it more stable, a large stone is placed in the tent and the woodwork of the roof is anchored to it by a rope.

The shape and structure of an aq-ai are similar to those of [354] the Mongolian yurt, but the interior arrangement differs. A fire always burns cheerily in the middle and a cauldron of mash [353] simmers upon it. At the far end is the kitchen, which is screened by gaily colored mats of reeds tightly wound with dyed wool. [251] Here the housewife stores her milk, cream and curds in vast wooden bowls. When the weather is wet, a row of young lambs [231] occupies one corner of the tent. They are tethered closely to a rope pegged down along the walls. Saddlebags, sieves, hats, [353] wool, coats, skins and so forth are hung along the tent walls. Piles of rolled-up felts and rugs occupy about a quarter of the circumference of the tent. The wealth of the owner may be guessed from the size of the piles.

563 The interior decoration in the tent of a wealthy Kirghiz is
342 often artistic. The walls are hung with embroideries made by
352 the women, and the ground is covered with carpets. There are
353 also pillows covered with multi-colored chintz of Chinese or Russian manufacture. Furniture is not generally used. There is [415] an occasional table, a few copper pots and pans, and some brass jugs used for boiling water and making tea.

563 b. Food

262 Staple foods for the Kirghiz are barley, bread, milk and its
252 products, such as sour cream and qurut, a kind of cheese. In most tents there are cauldrons of brewing mash, a mixture of flour and milk. Qurut is made by drying sour cream in goatskin.

/The Kirghiz/

000 before his father-in-law, it must be as a stranger. At this
563 stage, if the bride has proved to be unfaithful, the boy's father
586 may demand the bride price back and break off the marriage.

563 When the tent is finished, the bridegroom takes it and his
591 bride to his own home. If, after one year, the bride finds her
586 married life unsatisfactory, her father may return the bride price to her husband and the couple is divorced.

4. Work and leisure

563 General work around the tent is done entirely by women. The
462 women are strong, healthy, and energetic workers. They not
181 only do the housework, but they also milk the yaks, sheep, cows and goats, weave rugs, make rope and build and pitch the tents. Men, though strong and able to endure great hardships, incline
[517] toward indolence. They like to play the guitar far into the night.
[534] Nevertheless, they also have work to do. They cultivate the barley fields and look after the safety of the flocks and herds on the steep mountainsides.

563 The Kirghiz are sports-minded. Their most common game is
526 baiga, in which the carcass of a sheep or goat is the object of contention. Forty or fifty contestants, mounted on strong horses, strive for possession of the carcass. It is every man for himself. One man dashes forward with the carcass and the others pursue him, trying to tear it away from him. If he is unhorsed, by fair means or foul, he must yield up the trophy. A fast, furious, dangerous game, the Kirghiz love it. In it they display their remarkable horsemanship.

563 The Kirghiz love music and dancing. Only the men dance. The
535 music is provided by a dulcimer, a native banjo and a drum, and
534 much form and ceremony are involved in the dance.

D. The New Uighurs

563 1. The people

The New Uighurs are also called the Eastern Turks. They
[162] comprise about seventy per cent of the population in the southern
[131] part of Sinkiang Province, and some live north of the Tienshan Mountains wherever the soil is fit for agriculture. They are a farming people.

563 The New Uighurs are noted for their gentle character, their
181 honesty, hospitality and complaisance. Criminal offenses among
[674] them are very rare; they look upon such crimes as murder,
[342] arson and robbery with a sort of horror. Their houses are never locked, and their grain is stored in outside repositories.

[251] They are a people who love to make music. Their most com-
[534] mon instruments are the dotou, a two-stringed guitar, a six-stringed mandolin and the tambourine. Boys and young men sing
563 wherever they go, and there are singing beggars and wandering
533 minstrels. The people have love songs, ballads, comic ditties,

/The New Uighurs/

563 songs of poverty and exile, and popular songs of various kinds.
[533] The New Uighurs are great believers in the efficacy of local
[796] saints, and there are innumerable shrines all over their region
[798] dedicated to saints and heroes.

2. Patterns of living

563 a. Dwelling

342 Most of the people live in small hud houses called öy, or
[184] sometimes hānä, which resemble the simple earth, stone and reed-mat homes of the poor farmers of North China. Rich people live in well-built houses with courtyards and gardens.

The typical design of the house is a flat roof upon which small openings are left to serve as windows. The windowframes are equipped with folding shutters, and are closed at night during the winter. The window openings are so small they admit
[354] little light, and the interior is always in semi-darkness. Floor
[352] and walls are packed with reed mats and earth. The rear of the room is set apart by a partition of squared beams, and has a raised floor. This elevated section, its floor covered with reed mats and thick felt, serves as the bed and also the dining table. Most of the family's time at home is spent on this elevation. The door of the house is so low that one must bend down to pass through it. Almost every room has a chimney.

[251] The flat-topped roof of the house is used for drying grain and other agricultural products. Each house also has a veranda on
[352] which plank beds are constructed for use during the summer. Couches of wood or clay under the trees also serve as sleeping accommodations during hot weather. A house with a courtyard
[351] is surrounded by a wall of earth. In the southern area, the gar-
[184] dens of the homes are surrounded by hedges.

b. Food

563 Wheat and corn are the staple foods of the people. Rice is a
262 luxury used only for entertaining and festival occasions. Meat is preferred to vegetables, and mutton to beef. Chickens, ducks and other fowl are eaten, but not considered especially desirable. The famous Turfan raisins and Hami (Qomul) melons supply large quantities of fresh fruits for these people. Mare's milk
[272] is drunk extensively, and the noble drink called kumis, horse
[273] milk wine, is considered the most healthful of all sour milk concoctions.

563 For entertaining, camel and horse meat, beef and mutton are
262 served with fresh fruits, crystalized sugar and kumis. Meats
252 may be boiled or roasted. The most common dishes are grilled mutton and kidney, and cold boiled mutton and liver with bread. The favorite dish, called pilav, is made of the fattest mutton or beef cut into small pieces and cooked with rice, chopped carrot, onion, garlic and seedless raisins, cooked in a large cauldron.
[264] Liquid foods are eaten with wooden spoons. Other foods, including thick porridge and pilav, are eaten with the fingers.